

The Glory of His Grace

By Herman Hoyt

Ps. 85:10

There is one characteristic of civilization which haunts a man from the day of his birth until the day of his death. As a principle it may be comprehended in these words: "You don't get something for nothing." Or similarly stated: "You pay for all you get."

It is not my purpose to expound this principle to you. It is enough to know that the principle is in practice, inextricably bound up with every act and move of our lives. Today is the Lord's Day, and in keeping with everything that is of God, my desire is to turn your thoughts in a diametrically opposite direction; from the things of earth and of men, to the things of heaven and of God.

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky;
So it was when my life began.
So it is now, I am a man.
So be it when I grow old
Or let me die.

So wrote the poet Wordsworth. His heart was stirred with the external beauty of the rainbow. But with a deeper meaning, I can say that my heart leaps up when I behold that rainbow in the sky. And my prayer is that it shall be so all the days of my life; for it is the seal of the grace of God written across the canopy of heaven, pledging the eternal freeness of his grace to all.

The 85th Psalm is the revelation of the grace of God to a man who has grown weary staggering under the burdens of the weight of this world. The demands of the world are too much. The world cries, "PAY", for all you get. The struggling farmer is faced with a burden of taxation. The half-paid laborer is faced with exorbitant prices. The beggar must wander on in search of food. It is the man who has searched the world over for happiness; who has spent his last dollar for abiding pleasure; who has frittered away his last hour for a moment of peace, —who finally faces the miserable conclusion that his search was too soon ended, that his last dollar was not enough, that his last hour was too brief. It is that man who cries out in despair: (Ps. 85:7) "Show us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation."

Last spring a group of some 5,000 people in the city of Philadelphia, made their way to a football field, and there sent up their wailing cry to God, "Show us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation." Ravaged with hunger, facing starvation, unable to meet the financial demands of the world,—thus they were forced to their knees. It is told of a prominent saloon keeper of Johnstown, Pennsylvania, that during that historic flood, he was seen on the top of his saloon, being swept on to destruction. His posture was that of one in anguish. He was on his knees invoking the powers which he thought to be, for mercy and a present salvation.

The Psalmist in this case is rewarded, and God answers his petition with a revelation of his mercy and grace, for he says in verse 8, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak; for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints."

You will be astounded to note that the Psalmist whose experience with God has always been the most favorable, takes it upon himself to inject at this point a warning note of exhortation: "but let them not turn again to folly." I can add nothing to the warning, save to say that it is timely, appropriate, and needed. Men need to be warned lest they spurn the Grace of God and turn to folly. If God be pleased to reveal his grace to any man; woe be to that man who rejects it in favor of the foolishness of this world.

The first element of his grace is its characteristic nearness to all who love HIM. But the great accomplishment of God's grace is set forth in the 10th verse: "Mercy and

truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." But remember: this verse will mean nothing to you, if you do not grasp the inflexible character of God's truth, and the unattainableness of God's righteousness. There is no mercy and peace if these do not obtain. There is no grace of God, if God is not righteous in his being, operating under the standard of his own eternal truth.

I. The Inflexible Standard of Truth

During the stormy hours of anguish, when Christ prayed to his Father in Gethsemane, he uttered a statement which is characteristic of God: "Thy word is truth." On another occasion Jesus Christ said of himself: "I am ... the truth." He himself was the Living Word and as such, he was the personified truth of God.

God's word is a standard; the standard of God. Christ is the living standard. Accordingly, by the word of God all things are measured. In Washington, D. C. there is a standard yard-stick by which all the yardsticks in the United States are measured. There is a pound weight by which all pound weights are compared. There is a quart measure by which all quart measures are gauged. So it is with God. There is a standard by which all things are gauged, compared, or measured.

God is measured by his own standard and is declared to be righteous. God is the zenith of holiness. He is righteous in all his ways. He is the pinnacle of perfection. With him there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. By the same standard man is measured and declared to be a sinner. Paul expresses it in this way in Romans: "There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes. ... For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:10-18, 23).

At this point justice steps in and demands the punishment of man for every aberration from the standard of God. It is a horrible contemplation, but it is an inescapable demand, that every sin must reap its reward. The justice of God demands that every sin be punished. Judgment stares every man in the face. The inevitable consequences of sin are unshakable. The self-righteous complex of the self-deluded sinners will not avail, for he will carry the inward premonition of sin and its judgment to his dying day.

In the presence of such ominous and constant reminders, the human soul in mental anguish can do nothing but cry out to the Father of Lights for mercy. Notice the fearful meditations of the Psalmist in verses 4-6 of the 85th Psalm. Is it any wonder that he cries out in the 7th verse: "Show us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation." I remember so distinctly when I was somewhat younger than I am now, that the knowledge of misconduct at home with its judgment worked no end of misery in my mind, and forced me to cry out for mercy many times. No doubt many of you have had similar experiences. Occasionally I escaped the dreaded punishment. But with God, his justice must be satisfied. The punishment must be applied, for the wages of sin is death. It is an immutable, unalterable law.

II. The Unattainable Perfection of Righteousness

According to the standard of truth God is righteous. In

his being he is righteous. His thoughts are righteous. His deeds are righteous. His laws are righteous. His decrees are righteous. He is altogether righteous. Being what he is, certain laws determine what his relationship shall be. Since God is righteous he will not tolerate sin in his presence: "For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" (2 Cor. 6:14). Therefore, men must possess righteousness to stand in the presence of God, "For without holiness no man shall see God" Heb. 12:14). Since truth declares that men do not possess righteousness, and cannot attain it by themselves, the justice of God demands eternal enmity and separation from God. When men look the righteousness of God in the face, attempt to measure up to its standards, fail utterly and miserably in the effort, then they cry out: "Grant us thy salvation," give us deliverance.

Humanly speaking, men cannot satisfy the standard of truth; nor produce the righteousness of God; but in the extremity of man, the grace of God performs the most marvelous, most unthinkable, and most unspeakable task of all eternity. The Psalmist refers to the work of creation, as the work of God's fingers. But when Isaiah mentions the work of redemption, he talks of the arm of the Lord. Here in the words of the text is the marvel of grace: "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

III. The Supreme Accomplishment of the Grace of God

We are so ready to declare the love of God and ignore the justice of God. But there is no love of God, if there is no justice. Because the justice of God makes its just demands, and they must be satisfied, then the Love of God comes to the front, and by grace supplies all the demands of justice. And herein is love: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life." Before the foundations of the world, God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ made a covenant in heaven. In their plan, Christ the Son was to become the servant of the Father, and he was to be sent into the world to do his Father's bidding. Time after time in the Gospels you will hear Jesus say, "I do the will of him that sent me."

The first thing he did was to lay aside the garments of glory and be made in the likeness of sinful man. The independent use of his heavenly attributes was no longer his privilege. As a servant he was sent into this world, and throughout his servanthip he obeyed the will of him who sent him.

Out of the Ivory palaces
Into a world of woe,
Only his great eternal love
Made my Savior go.

This servanthip of the Lord Jesus Christ is the governing principle of heaven. It has baffled the sages and the wisemen of all ages. They could not understand it, so they denied that it existed. But the inability of the finite mind to understand the mystery of his Grace does not annihilate the grace of God. Daniel Webster made the assertion to a group of assembled guests that if he could understand Jesus Christ he would no longer worship him. We marvel at the love of mother. It is sometimes true that we are astonished at the love of a wife or a husband. But face to face with the Grace of God manifest to us in the incarnation of his own Son in human flesh, defies astonishment. It is an ineffable, unspeakable, wordless manifestation of the Grace of God. The sacrifice of a missionary, who leaves home to go into heathen lands commands our admiration; but Jesus Christ, the first missionary, left heaven to journey into this wilderness of sin. The incarnation is the Grace of God.

By the decree of Grace, Jesus Christ was to be the mercy of God to a lost world. He was to go to the Cross and there bear in his own body, the punishment of men, that men might escape punishment. In love God sent

Christ to satisfy his justice. In this manner, mercy might be extended to miserable humanity, whose wailing cry had gone up: "Show us thy mercy, O Lord." In a certain school, the law had been laid down that anyone caught doing wrong, or breaking the rules, should be subject to a punishment of so many strikes with the birch rod. Unfortunately, a small lad was caught soon afterwards in the very act. He was arraigned before the whole school for punishment. The little fellow sensed his danger and feared the consequences. The teacher, calling him to the front, ordered him to remove his coat. The little lad, shivering with fright, could scarcely move. He pulled the coat up closer around his neck. The situation became so tense, that a young lad who could stand it no longer, threw off his coat, marched between the small boy and the teacher, and demanded to be whipped instead of the small boy.

This is a miniature of the grace of God. Shivering humanity faces punishment, but Christ, the Son of God steps forth in our place, throws off the mantle of his glory, and giving himself to be rent with cruel nails, and pierced with a sharp spear, and lifted upon a Cross, suffered the punishment for all humanity. Jesus Christ who knew no sin, became sin for us. But that is not all of grace.

"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. 5:21). Clothed in a robe of righteousness which is by faith in him, we are no longer at war with God, but there is peace between us, and we may look forward to the time when we shall stand in his presence unashamed and without blame. By Grace, he came to take away our sin and give us in exchange his spotless robe of righteousness. He wore the crown of thorns but he gave us a crown of glory. Wonderful, marvelous, matchless grace, that can achieve the impossible, fulfill the demands of justice, and yet release the hands of God to bestow eternal life on whom he wills. Thus in the Cross of Christ—"Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

As we review the marvelous record of Grace in God, In Christ, and in us, we see plainly two things. It is a gospel for the sinner. It excludes all human merit, renounces all human claim, and centers in God alone. If anyone should say, "It is too cheap," let him look at Calvary and see the cost to God. If anyone should say, "It is too easy," let him look at Calvary again, and realize what was needed to put sin away. It is cheap. It is easy for us, because it is without money and without price. If it were not so, there would be no salvation at all. But to God it was unspeakably costly, because sin was so hideous and awful as to necessitate it. But the precious Blood of Christ is the glory of his grace, and now to us who believe it, he is indeed precious and will be through all eternity. It is also a gospel for the saint. It not only provides redemption, but it humbles pride, guarantees holiness, inspires to service, incites to hope, pledges heaven, and glorifies God. No wonder we are invited to receive this grace and are warned against receiving it in vain. Grace does not work apart from our responsibility. We must use it, believe it, respond to it, and reproduce it.

In this closing poem, you will find in the first two verses, despair,—the condition of a man outside of Christ. The last two verses were written when the same man had found hope in Christ Jesus.

I've tried in vain a thousand ways
My fears to quell, my hopes to raise;
But what I need the Bible says,
Is only Jesus.

My soul is night, my heart is steel;
I cannot see, I cannot feel.
For light, for life, I must appeal
In simple faith to Jesus.

He died, he lives, he reigns, he pleads;
There's love in all his words and deeds;

There's all a guilty sinner needs
Forevermore in Jesus.

Tho some should sneer, and some should blame,
I'll go with all my guilt and shame;
I'll go to him because his name,
Above all names is Jesus.

In the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, the convergent event of all history, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other," accomplished through the grace of God. "Let them not turn again to folly." Ashland, Ohio.